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Memorial Day Address

By Luther R. Marsh,
Middletown, N. Y.

1899.

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COMMANDER Wheeler, and Comrades of the General Lyon Post; of the Jackson Post; and of the Union Veterans' Union, Capt. Fuller's Command:

I have always felt like congratulating you of the Gen. Lyon Post on the name you have adopted for your organization within the Grand Army of the Republic. General Nathaniel Lyon was one of the grandest and most self-sacrificing heroes of our late Civil War. He had his origin in old Connecticut, that mother of jurists, statesmen, and warriors. Thoroughly trained in that National Military School which is embraced in our own County of Orange, he was well equipped for service in the field. In the Seminole War he became familar with the Everglades; as treacherous as the tribes that inhabited them. At Contreras and Cherubusco he earned the brevet of Captain. He was wounded at Belen Gate in the assault on the City of Mexico. Afterwards, in conducting an expedition against the Indians of Northern California he won unstinted praise for his skill, his celerity of movement, his secret marches. Subsequently, returning East, his hide-bound politics gave way before the debates he listened to in Congress, and his original humanity swam to the top. On the frontiers of Dakotah he encountered perils and bereavement.

From the commencement of the Great Rebellion, he stood, a pillar of the Union. No one more diligent or earnest in countervailing the schemes of the secessionists. In a desperate rally against the outnumbering forces of Sterling Price, at Wilson's Creek, his horse was shot under him; himself twice wounded, yet, amid the thunder of the battle, he changed his headquarters to the back of another steed, and dashing to the very front of his wavering line,—there, alas, a shot tore through his breast and his career was ended. He made his Country his legatee, and, by some thirty thousand dollars, enriched her treasury. A nobler consecration of time, service, property, and life, has no record. Well may you honor and perpetuate the name.

The Jackson Post,—named after that typical soldier of our city, William A. Jackson,—and the Union Veteran's Union — Commander Fuller,—kindred associations — join you in your homage to-day; and with you will visit their sacred grounds.

Soldiers; your names, your organizations, your equipment, your titles, and your record, prove, that, when summoned, you were prompt to meet the emergencies of war; to stand, when need was, before the death-dealing tubes of those who sought to divide the Union; to put yourselves on the hazard; to run all risks for the integrity and honor of the nation; to disregard the whistling missiles of death whenever the national symbol—our flag of stars—North or South, East or West,—a flag unacquainted with defeat—seemed to be in peril.

But, now, you are in a community of peace. All is quiet, as if you were in Paradise.

"War thoughts
Have left their places vacant."

You come up here from your homes of serenity and peace. The drum and the trumpet, at whose signal, you fall into ranks, and marshal yourselves in array, do not, as once, summon you to actual combat. Your bayonets are not fixed. At the close of the day they will show no reddened points. No blood, hostile or friendly, will enrich the soil of Middletown. No unburied corse of gallant rider, champing steed, or stalwart footman, will lie on the field to-night. No weeping orphans, no freshly widowed wives, need mourn their losses to-morrow. War, to you, is a memory only.

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer," assisted by these sons of York,
' And all the clouds that lowered upon our " Country
" In the deep bosom of the ocean buried."

We are at peace all around the globe. The sea-surrounded uprisals in the Caribbean, give us no trouble. New isles of beauty and fertility have come under our flag, or established friendly relations with us.

We hold the gates of the mid-Pacific, and many island-jewels sparkle in our hand.

We extend our beneficence over the far-off Philippines, soon, I trust, to be re-christened the "Dewey Archipelago." Prouder will they be, in future times, to bear the name of the great Naval Hero of the age, than of the bloody Spanish tyrant of the Sixteenth Century, Philip the Second. The World's Atlases would gladly adopt the change.

This occasion is merely to recall, and pass in review, the brave deeds of the past ; to send thoughts of love and admiration to those who fell amid the shock of arms, or who, wearied with the long march, the comfortless bivouac, or the depletion of wounds, have since lain down by the way.

Since I addressed you at a similar assemblage, in 1892, I note a diminution in your numbers. There are gaps in your columns : not as the immediate result of rebel bullets, but by the scythe of Time. Every year there are fewer and fewer answers at Reveille, and fewer, yet fewer, responses at Tattoo. Within the year, Cornelius Crans, of the Jackson Post,—painfully wounded in the battle of the Wilderness,—whose life, since, was a romance,—has parted company ; within a month or so, Alanson Stevens, has received the burial services of our Order; and the mourning fusillade over the grave of John B. Leemon is yet in our ears.

In your name I welcome the invisible hosts of your companions who have gone from us. They have gone, but they have come. They return to meet you, and to receive your greetings. They are here, though obscured by the films of our material eyes, and are mindful of what you do, and of what you say, and of what you feel. They behold your testimonies of love and memory. Let us greet them with a full but silent salute.

In token of our love, we carpet the Necropolis with flowers. What mode so lovely in which to testify our regard for the memory of our friends as to shower their graves with the sweetest offerings of Nature ! The noisy demon-

strations that welcome the "Sabbath Day of Freedom," would seem out of place. Let not the air be disturbed by the clamor of guns! Let no loud artillery echo over the plains, nor reverberate along the hills! Let the welkin of peace overarch us, indicative of the peace that reigns with them. Call them not down to list the turbulence and resounding roar which would manifest our exuberance on this physical plane.

Softly fall, on the turfs of our heroes, the tinted and fragrant emblems of the resurrection! Upwards floats the incense of nature, of honor, of love! Let no badge of mourning darken the scene! Let black be exiled. We rejoice; we do not mourn. We claim kindred with those who have gone before. No voice of sorrow pierces our ears. It is a jubilee. The ties that have been snapped are reunited: the wounds received are cicatrized, the deeds of heroism are recorded. The harvest of triumph is being reaped. The fruition of their labors and perils is the enjoyment of peace, prosperity, and freedom, by the whole people.

My thought was well expressed by Henry Ward Beecher, who said: "When I am dead, strew flowers upon my grave; but let no heathenish practice prevail at my funeral,—of putting on black drapery and the livery of sorrow for a soul which has passed through the shadow of death into eternal life."

Therefore, let the Roses of Sharon, and the Lillies of the Valley, attend our ceremony. Come forth from field and garden and conservatory, all flowers of roseate tint; the hyacinths and the fuschias, the geraniums and crysanthe-

mums,the oleanders and azaleas, and lay your beauties on the tombs! Speak to us as you send up your spiritual essences to greet the spirits who have come down to meet you. Adorn our sepulchres with a magnificence that Tyrian rivalry could not imitate; and a glory beyond the reach of Judah's King.

In a recent utterance, the great preacher, Talmage, exclaimed: "The flowers are the angels of the grass. When the clouds speak, they thunder; when the whirlwinds speak, they scream; when the cataracts speak, they roar; but when the flowers speak, they always whisper."

It is not alone in Middletown that this memorial is tendered. Everywhere, over the land, the ceremony is repeated. In villages unnumbered the citizens gather, as here. It is a universal testimonial. Everywhere the same reverential enthusiasm prevails. The Stars and Stripes look down upon it all, and take on a brighter hue, and a fuller swing. Martial melody harmonizes the scene. All business sleeps. No chain dangles or clanks in all the land. No foot of slave prints the ground. "There's freedom on the old plantations." From Lakes to Gulf, from Sea to Sea, old Glory floats unquestioned. An emancipated people cover the continent. To have participated in such an achievement, it was worth while to die. To die, did I say; rather to rise to higher life, and take a broader view of the continental consummation.

And so, the soldiers of that day, on whichever side of the great line they lived, whatever the color of their uniform,—or blue or gray,—illustrating, alike, American

valor, are embraced in the great American heart. How exquisitely Judge Francis M. Finch,—our "Prince of Ithaca,"—embodies the sentiment :—

"From the silence of sorrowful hours,
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers,
Alike for the friend and foe ;—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day ;
Under the roses the Blue ;
Under the lillies the Gray.

* * * * * *

No more shall the war cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red ;
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead !
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day,—
Love and tears for the Blue ;
Tears and Love for the Gray.

So have the words of Wendell Phillips, which concluded his great speech of April 21, 1861, found justification. He said :—

"The result is as sure as the Throne of God. I believe in the possibility of justice,in the certainty of Union. Years hence, when the smoke of the conflict clears away, the world will see under our banner all tongues, all creeds, all races,—one brotherhood ; and on the banks of the Potomac, the Genius of Liberty, robed in light, four and thirty stars for her diadem, broken chains under her feet, and an olive branch in her right hand."

That time has already come. The thirty-four stars have grown to forty-five; the oneness of the country is assured. "*E. Pluribus Unum*" is no longer a mere sentiment; it is a grand reality. Before, there were always threats of breaking off pieces of the Union on this side or that. A little dissatisfaction was followed by menances of severance.

This threat was held over the heads of Congress and of the legislators of the Northern States. Men, if they happened to be in any Southern State, dared not repeat the very words of Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry. The question had to be settled; and it was settled, and settled forever. There was no Appellate Court above the Tribunal that adjudged it. Your own voices were potent in the decision. You, Comrades, were Associate Judges on the Bench of that High Tribunal of the People,—that ultimate Court of last resort,—that pronounced the final decree.

And so, all parts of the Country came together in a union most complete and indivisible. It was not a mere unition of several parts by a sort of political Portland cement; but a thorough interblending, a composite, homogeneous in character, and incapable of separation. The Nation became, and is, One; one in patriotism, one in prosperity, one in destiny, one forever.

The value of this complete unition was demonstrated in our recent conflict with Spain. No sooner was the tocsin of war sounded, than it was responded to through our most distant borders. Texas and Maine, New York and Minnesota, the old States of the East, and the New States of the

West, strove to see which would first reach the front. Kansas heard it, and sent one of her cyclones, personified in Funston. As, in our Civil War,—in which you partook—Kilpatrick, of New Jersey, leaped to the saddle from his school at West Point; and Miles, of Massachusetts, sprang from the counter to the stirrups, and Grant, of Galena, left his tannery to rise to the Supreme Command, so, now, the lads of the North and the South, of the East and the West, hastened at their country's call;—displaying equal skill, courage, and capacity, for service or command, whether their peaceful homes were on the Atlantic coast, along the Pacific wave, or on the mountains, hills, and valleys that lie between. The graceful Equestrian from the smooth paths of Central Park, rode side by side with the Rough Rider of the mustangs of the prairies, up the slopes of San Juan; while our citizen,—now our Governor,—uniting in himself the disciplines of the metropolis and of the frontier, was ever in the lead.

There has been no degeneracy in American temper, skill, or valor, since your day of martial activity. Think of it. The call to arms, from peaceful occupations, was sudden and unexpected. The explosion of a mine, under the hull of our good Ship, Maine, while she rocked in Cuban waters, stirred the depths of the ocean; and resounded over the land. It found us without troops, without an adequate navy, without artillery, without ammunition, without any preparation; but with an abundance of determination and an abundance of men. There was military inexperience in the heads of government. We had only black-smoking

and tell-tale powder. And worst of all, "and most to be deplored", we had men amongst us who were willing to fill their pockets at the expense of the health and strength of our soldiers.

Oliver Cromwell used to say, when he had beaten his enemies, that "their stomachs came down." The stomach has always played an important part in war. There has, indeed, been some fierce fighting done on empty stomachs,—as in the case of Gen. Stark, at Bennington; and Marion and his men got strength enough for their brilliant exploits from sweet potatoes. But that our troops in Cuba accomplished such results, with their innutritious and nauseous food,—triumphing over the sickness of camp, the weakness of hunger, and the valor of their foes,—proves the invincibility of American arms. Rations, repugnant to the taste, disgusting to the stomach, unfit for men, were thrown to the ground, to sicken Cuban vultures. There is no condemnation too severe for the authors of it. Let their names and infamy ever be united. But what admiration for our soldiers, who, depleted by the malaria of camp, and by distasteful, nerveless food, struggling on a foreign and unexplored land, and opposed by a brave and war-like enemy, yet pushed on

"Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar,"

through chapparal and jungle, through cactus-thorns and wire-woven barricades, over hills and fortifications,—pushed on, I say, with the certainty of fate, to the jubilations of victory!

Our navy leaped suddenly into life, extemporized its artillery, and munitions of war, and rode the yeasty wave as Master of the Sea. Whole armored fleets, rejoicing in complete equipment, and with traditions of success, went down before it, as the silence of distant lands and waters was broken by the triumphant voices of our guns.

New names came forth, in Navy and Army,—some from the unknown, and some to added fame,—and the names of Dewey and Schley, of Miles and Wheeler, of Hobson and Funston, of Otis and Mac Arthur, and many, many, many another, have risen to their conspicuous and permanent place in American history. If I had my way, I would not omit the names of Capt. Joseph B. Coghlan and Rear Admiral Kautz.

And when the Government called for troops to cross the broad expanse of the continent, and then encounter two thousand miles of sea, that they might hold, for a season, the Sandwich group, there came forth, in our county of Orange, from the occupations of peace,— the farm, the shop, the store,—extemporized soldiers to meet the emergency; one of whom, a gallant youth,—*Alfred C. Weller*,—has left to his parents, and to his city, only an honored memory.

The truth is, that such has been the admixture of races, bringing out the best qualities of each; such the combination of circumstances and opportunity; such the advantages of education; that this land, from bound to bound, through all its peaceful avocations, is full of raw material, however undeveloped, which requires only the occasion, to be immediately converted into men of heroic mould; men who

rise to all emergencies; having the prescience to foresee the necessity; having the skill to adapt themselves to the circumstances; having the courage to do what their ingenuity invents: and who dare to tell the truth. The Mexican war, the Civil war, the Spanish war, are, each of them, full of illustrations.

The proud and ancient Kingdom of Castile and Aragon; whose war experiences date from Roman times; a war-like race from the beginning; the bloodiest, the cruelest of all the nations; defending herself against Rome; against the Turks; against the Saracens; against the Arabs; against the English; against the French;—always at war; sending her adventurous navigators in quest of new domains; sending Cortes to Mexico and Pizaro to Peru; this fierce and fighting nation, as soon as she came in collision with the United States, soon found her prestige gone, her power broken, her navy sunk, her territories captured; and the coarse terms of derision with which she began the war converted into strains of humiliation; all this in a hundred and thirteen days. Not one of our guns turned its muzzle upon us; and not one of our pennons changed its custody. History records no parallel. Her Latin National Sympathizers suddenly awoke to the supremacy of the Saxon. Spain has made two great discoveries; one by her Genoese Columbus, of the New World; and, again, some four hundred years thereafter, that that New World could not be safely insulted.

Not wholly without recompense are the horrors of war. It is the prerogative of Providence to overrule all evil for good.

And so we must often have observed how, when the tumult of combat has subsided, the banners folded, the great guns limbered and retired, the swords hung on the wall, the angry passions of contending hosts subdued, and peace resumed, that new activities start into life, the world moves onward with fresh vigor, new combinations occur, and more welcome are the amenities of life. It would almost seem as if these national antagonisms, these contending hosts, were not outside the plans formed Above. This possibility got hold of our friend, already quoted, Judge Finch, when he sang:

> With shock of war the Ages move;
> With blow of hate is moulded Love;
> And out of anvils' pound and ring
> The iron frames of Progress spring.
> In every clash of struggling thought
> Is working some eternal leaven;
> In every battle planned and fought,
> "The guns were shotted all in Heaven."

He were a wise man, in his own conceit, who should think he could comprehend and unfold the Divine decrees. When our shores beheld the morning Sun of some year ago, who could have foretold the destiny that would befall ere the year's circuit should be completed? Was it then in the design of Deity that the Caribbean Seas,—so long the home of the Buccaneers, and of cruelties untold,— should be cleared of the infesting tyrants, and opened to the progress of civilization? Who would have thought, that an archipelago of more than fourteen hundred isles, far removed from the great movements of the world, in the remote Pacific, would come under the dominion of the Stripes and Stars, and bring us in near proximity to the thronging nests

of China, and the Orient? Who could have foretold that such would be the influence of our Republican Institutions that the Polynesian group, in the midst of the Pacific,—more than 2,000 miles from even our western border, should hold out to us the Olive Branch, and of choice, come under the aegis of American law?

In all this,– in this sudden, unexpected, and wide extending evolution,—so contrary to our own designs,—is it presumptuous to suppose that it was in accordance with some divine plan, that Liberty should invade the realms of barbarism; light flow in; and progress be made in the evangelization of the globe? Slowly, slowly, will unfold the great intent to the generations that are coming! Our own may only see the dawn.

It is expected that men will differ on questions of great National policy. Perfect unanimity might suggest stagnation.

Some there are who think that we should sit down in our original isolation; and stretch no hand out beyond the limits of the first survey.

Others believe that having received immense accessions to our first territory, at a cost of many millions; Florida, Louisiana, Texas, the entire coast of Alabama and Mississippi, and gold-laden Alaska,—we should be content, and ask no more; that we have room enough for our expanding millions, when we can wet our alternate elbows, one in the Atlantic wave, and the other in the surge of the Pacific.

There are many, however, who believe—shall I not say the overwhelming majority,— that they descry the point-

ings of manifest destiny, beyond the boundaries, original and acquired; that Providence indicates that we should belt the globe with the institutions of freedom and enlightenment. We seem to be cornered by inevitable events; and no way opens before us but the one we are pursuing. Meantime affairs go on. The helm of State is over-guided by a hand too potent to resist. All will be well. My optimism permits no cloud to shade it.

For myself, I would cling to every island, every acre,—excepting Cuba, till she comes voluntarily,—which Providence has given us. We cannot afford to throw away the twenty millions of purchase money paid for the Philippines, and the many other millions paid for conquering and defending them. Nor could we look the world in the face, if we should leave them to their own barbarian rule, or the adventurer's sway; to a tyranny worse, if possible, than that from which they have escaped. Nor would we be justified in leaving them unprotected, as a prize for contending nations. The duty is devolved on us to retain a protectorate until a free government, suited to the people, shall be provided.

I should think that those who, by their sympathy and arguments in opposition have given hope to the insurgents; led them to believe that we were weak and divided; stimulated them to fight; and thus cost them and us much of treasure and life, would be troubled in their consciences for the rest of their lives. And Boston, our own Boston, which boasts of Faneuil Hall, and was always aflame with patriotism, harbors the nest. Aguinaldo has found that, through

them, he has misconceived us, and our power. Such must have been his reflections as he proceeds far in advance of his army,—provided it is, as usual, on the retreat.

Let us then, open wide the gates of the Orient. Send thither our manufactures. Bring hither their products. Let the East and the West shake hands!

Now what say you for the work before us? Down, where the broad continent narrows to an isthmus; where the great oceans approach so near that they can almost hear each other's roar; and where the Nicaraguan lake and the river of San Juan yet more diminish the distance of land carriage, we must furrow a mighty waterway between the seas, so that our greatest ships, as they dry the waters of the Atlantic on their prows, may, in a few hours, find themselves plowing the smooth surface of the Pacific; —saving many thousand tedious leagues around the stormy Horn. This seems to me to be our most imperative and immediate need. If Nicaragua is not practicable, then take the isthmus of Tehuantepec, or some other route, which shall break the barrier that divides the oceans, and make them one. This would put us more nearly in touch with our Philippine possessions, and draw up to us, more closely, the ports of China, Japan, Australia, India, and the western coast of South America; and bring within quicker access, and into a more intimate communion the cities of our Eastern and Western shores.

Then, soon, will follow new and numerous keels laid in our Navy Yards, to sustain the giant masts from the forests of Maine and Colorado. Our armor-clads, whose decks are

realms presided over by American Law, wherever they may be,—will float their pennants in many a sea. Our Mercantile Marine, welcomed in all parts of the world,—carrying and bringing—will arrest the tribute we pay to foreign ships,—even now counting half a million dollars every day; but still, a trifle compared to what it is to be.

And, then, next, to bring into a more intimate acquaintance, Erie and the Hudson, by an artificial river capable of bearing through the Empire State, our heaviest tonnage; pouring a world's traffic through our fresh-water inland seas, and supplying them with moving fortresses.

Comrades: I once felt, and still retain an affection for the Military Arm, which eighty-six full rounded years have not cooled. Educated at Captain Partridge's Military Institution, at the Connecticut Middletown, I cannot, even now, hear the Star Spangled Banner,—which was daily played by our magnificent Band, at the battalion dismissals—without being transported, in memory, to our *Campus*, and, standing at a rest, with grounded arms, thrilling at the martial strains. This was seventy-two years ago. This school, "The American, Literary, and Scientific Academy," is now removed to Vermont, and continued there, at Northfield, as the Norwich University--but the same school. It has been a rich source of supply, of the best material, for our Army and Navy, in the Mexican, Civil, and Spanish wars, as well as for our civil governments. Among my cotemporaries was Horatio Seymour, since Governor of New York; and T. Henry Seymour, since Governor of Connecticut, who was the first to scale the heights and enter the fortress of Che-

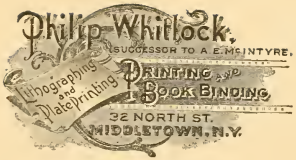
pultepec. Some notable names are among its *alumni*. Among them, Col. Truman B. Ransom, who received a Mexican bullet in his forehead, while charging up the heights of Chepultepec; and his son, General Ransom, who, says Gen. O. O. Howard, was one of the most gallant men in the service; William A. Beach, the great advocate who lately left us in New York; Zera Colburn, the wonderful Mathametician; Major-Gen. W. S. Harney; Lieut.-Col. Edward E. Phelps; but I am sure he didn't learn the secret of "Paine's Celery Compound," at our academy; Maj.-Gen. Horatio G. Wright, who broke the strong lines of Petersburgh; of whom Grant wrote :— "Gen. Wright penetrated the line with his whole corps. sweeping everything before him, and to his left, capturing many guns, and several thousand prisoners;" Maj. Gen. Grenville Mellen Dodge ;— well, I could fill pages with the names of eminent Generals, Major and Brigadier, Admirals, Captains, Colonels, Lieutenants, who having graduated here, have given their services to their country. In the Navy, I will mention Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy : the Captains Colvocoresses, father and son; Rear Admiral Paulding, Commodore Tatnall, Rear Admiral Charles Carroll Carpenter : But I must stop.

Gen. Sherman, addressing the Ransom Post at St. Louis, declared :— "This was an Academy of great renown. This school at one time almost rivalled the National Academy at West Point; and there many a man who afterward became famous in the Mexican and Civil Wars, first drank in the inspiration of patriotism, and learned the les-

sons of the art of war. The reputation of the New England regiments must be attributed to the discipline and instruction received at this institution as much as to any single factor; and the Green Mountain Boys owe their reputation and success largely to their training within these halls."

I am sure you will give me time to add that not the least illustrious of the sons of my *Alma Mater* was, and is, *Admiral George Dewey.*

Comrades: We are soon to enter on the Twentieth Century. Not one of us will see the end of it; but we can appreciate the beginning. The auspices are most favorable. We have a cloudless sky. The skirmishes on the island of Luzon have been somewhat tedious, have been expensive,—though slight in comparison with the gain,—but they have not really been serious. The control of these Pacific gems will open a way for Yankee genius to convert them into gardens: and to stimulate the interchange of riches, between the "gorgeous East" and the growing West. We have given the world an inkling of what America *is*. The knowledge of what she *is to be*, is folded up and hidden in the axle of Time. We may guess, we may conjecture, we may prophecy;—slowly the Divine purposes unfold themselves—but I venture to believe that, were the curtain which hides the doings of the next century now uprolled before the eyes of the boldest Seer, he would stand in such amaze, that he could find no language that would describe the Revelation.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